

SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION – MEMBERS BRIEFING NOTE NOV 2021

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to brief members of the MCC Strategic Transport Group on progress of various projects and activities surrounding Severn Tunnel Junction (STJ) railway station.

2. BACKGROUND

There are currently two main STJ projects. In 2019 MCC and Transport for Wales Rail Services (TfW RS) teamed up to develop and deliver a number of improvements at and around the station. In 2021 Transport for Wales (TfW) initiated a study into the STJ-related proposals in the South East Wales Transport Commission report (aka Burns report).

Over the years STJ has also been looking for train service improvements for STJ. Since at least 2019 Gran Union, a prospective train operator, is also looking to run a train service from South Wales to London, stopping at STJ and proposing improvements for the station.

3. MCC STJ project

In spring 2019 the Cardiff Capital Region asked MCC to name one project to be part of the regional Metro Plus programme, and MCC named STJ. At the same time TfW RS (aka Keolis Amey, then a separate organisation) contacted MCC to discuss improving STJ, as TfW RS had made a commitment to invest in improvements at the station as part of the franchise bid. MCC and TfW RS quickly agreed to do a joint project, Amey consulting were appointed by TfW RS to support the scheme development, and a masterplan was developed.

This masterplan contained the following elements:

- a) *New south-side car park with 150-200 spaces*
- b) *New footpath from this to the existing road bridge*
- c) *New footpath along the new car park to connect the two parts of Rogiet Country Park*
- d) *Electric car charging points*
- e) *Pedestrian improvements at Station Rd / road bridge / Station Approach / Severn Tunnel Court junction*
- f) *Extension of existing station footbridge to the new south-side car park*
- g) *New footpath along Station Approach and across the current car park to the main station entrance*
- h) *Upgrade the Rogiet Country Park car park & prevent it's misuse by commuters*
- i) *Additional bike parking*
- j) *Solar panels over (some) car parking spaces*
- k) *Improved station facilities – ticket office, waiting room, toilets, maybe café*
- l) *Consideration of a bus-rail interchange*
- m) *Upgrade current mudpath from STJ station to Garthalan Drive Caldicot*
- n) *Active travel / traffic calming / parking improvements in Rogiet*
- o) *New Rogiet – Undy walking/cycling path along B4245*

3.1 Progress on a), b), c), d) & e)

Planning permission has been granted for a 172-space car park and Walters Ltd appointed as contractor. Works will start mid-November and are expected to be completed this financial year. Works include new footpath from the car park to the road bridge, the footpath along the southern edge of the new car park to connect the two parts of Rogiet Country Park and the improvements to the Station Rd / road bridge / Station Approach / Severn Tunnel Court junction.

Infrastructure will be put into place so that we can connect in the future to fast charging EV charging points. An order has been placed with Western Power to supply a substation which will have the capacity for the fast chargers. The charges can then be supplied in conjunction with the Cardiff Capital Region.

3.2 Progress on f) & g)

Amey Consulting have developed draft outline designs for the extension of station footbridge to the new south-side car park and for a new footpath along Station Approach and across the current car park to the main station entrance. Discussions have started with Network Rail on the proposed footbridge outline design, and it is expected that discussions on the path will held later this year.

It should be noted that the footbridge extension will need to be approved & constructed by NR. The footpath will also need to be approved by NR as Station Approach and the current main car park are owned by NR.

3.3 Funding

The Cardiff Capital Region has made £3m available for each Metro Plus project. Half of this stems from Welsh Government Local Transport Fund grant and half from City-Deal funding. Additional costs up to a further £1.5m (ie £4.5m in total) would need to be paid for by MCC.

Overall spend is expected to reach £2m at the end of this financial year, including completion of the south-side car park and the design of the footbridge extension and Station Approach footpath.

A number of elements of the masterplan are at the moment not progressed as it is unclear whether there will be any funding to deliver them.

It should be noted that MCC will also receive £30k from the WG/TfW Burns Active Travel funding programme towards the improvement of the Station Rd / road bridge / Station Approach / Severn Tunnel Court junction

3.4 Further elements

h) Upgrade the Rogiet Country Park car park & prevent it's misuse by commuters

Draft undertaken and confirmed with MCC Countyside, who will price up and incorporate into main works.

- i) *Additional bike parking*
- j) *Solar panels over (some) car parking spaces?*
- k) *Improved station facilities – ticket office, waiting room, toilets, maybe café*

This was for TfW RS to progress

- l) *Consideration of a bus-rail interchange*

Overtaken by TfW post-Burns study

- m) *Upgrade current mudpath from STJ station to to Garthalan Drive Caldicot*

Paused

- n) *Active travel / parking improvements in Rogiet*

20mph speed limited for Rogiet is underway. Proposals for additional parking restrictions to prevent commuter parking within village and footpath improvements along Station Rd had paused and are now revisited

- o) *New Rogiet – Undy walking/cycling path along B4245*

Draft outline designs were developed in 2020. These suggested that this element would cost more than £1m, and it was then paused for financial reason. MCC is looking for funding from other sources to take this forward as a separate project.

4. TfW post-Burns study

See separate presentation

5. Grand Union Trains

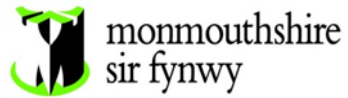
Grand Union is an open access train operating company that is planning to run services between South Wales and London Paddington, and Grand Union's plans would see these stop at STJ. The Grand Union proposal is supported by the Welsh Government. Grand Union are proposing investment at STJ to improve the access, the passenger facilities and experience, car park capacity, bike store facilities and freight/parcels handling, and have been in discussion with MCC officers.

In February 2021 the application was rejected. In April 2021 an amended application was lodged.

6. Train services

There main services stopping at STJ are the GWR Cardiff – Bristol – Portsmouth / Taunton services and the TfW Maesteg – Cardiff – Chepstow – Cheltenham Spa service.

The TfW service is currently irregular – mainly hourly but with some two-hour gaps. A small number of CrossCountry Cardiff – Birmingham – Nottingham trains also stop at STJ in the early morning or late evening. It is expected that the TfW service will be upgraded to hourly in December. The Cardiff Capital Region Metro proposals



suggests that all routes within the region will eventually be improved to turn-up-and-go, defined as a 4 trains/hour.

The GWR is currently half-hourly in the peak hours and hourly at other times. MCC have previously asked to provide an all-day half-hourly service.

MCC has also asked GWR whether an experimental inter-city service to London can be provided, with initially perhaps one morning train to London and one afternoon return.